

# THE ORIGINS OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY: ON BAUMGARTEN'S PSYCHOLOGY

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## Introductory remarks

Studies on A.G. Baumgarten usually emphasize two main features. The first concerns Baumgarten's foundation of aesthetics as a discipline in its own right, based on the emancipation of the empirical sphere from pure intellectual principles. The second is linked to Kant's use of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* as a handbook for his lectures on metaphysics throughout his whole academic career (1762-1795). Certainly, these two points are connected to each other because many of the methodological premises of the *Aesthetica* are placed in the *Metaphysica*, and the acknowledgment of an independent status for the sensibility is one of the main themes of Kantian criticism, namely of *Transcendental Aesthetics*.

The goal of this paper is to show some further and deeper reasons for Baumgarten to mark a division between the so called Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition and the Kantian transcendental revolution, and to emphasize that these reasons are rooted in the psychology as it is treated in Baumgartens's *Metaphysica*.

In the first part we will provide a brief account of the origin of the distinction between the concepts of *I* and soul, as it is characterized in modern philosophy. That will let us assess how Baumgarten's conception of subjectivity tries to fill this gap by clarifying some ambivalences, which were already emerged in Wolff's distinction between empirical and rational psychology.

This will require an analysis of the concept of soul, which is directly linked to the more general one of *simple substance* and so to the faculties it can be endowed with. As a result we will see that, though Baumgarten can still be included within the Wolffian tradition because of the *ordo*

*expositionis* of his *Metaphysica*, this work is nonetheless crossed by a sort of deep common thread, endowing the system with a consistence we cannot find in the “schulphilosophische” predecessors.

Finally we will try to demonstrate the effectiveness of Baumgarten’s original approach by underlining his contribution to the solution of some thorny problems faced by Kant in the key moments of the foundation of criticism.

## 1. Bridging the gap between the *I* and the soul

Within the modern tradition Locke seems to be the first to place a sharp distinction between the soul as substance (*res cogitans*) and the person as consciousness (*ego cogitans*), and by doing so he resolves a hard ambiguity of the Cartesian perspective.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Locke raises an apparently opposite difficulty, since there seems to be no way left to find a link between the two terms.

Even Leibniz, whose monadological theory cannot fit with this scission, seems in a sense to endorse Locke’s perspective by admitting the basic difference between the *I* and the soul. He obviously maintains the continuity between *simple monad*, *soul-monad* and *I*, but in the *Nouveaux Essais* he states that the inherence and permanence of perceptions within the monad allow for fixing the continuity of personal identity *also* through the continuity of the soul.<sup>2</sup> Moreover the continuity of memory is not necessary for Leibniz to produce personal identity, just like its discontinuity is not enough to destroy it.<sup>3</sup>

From a different point of view É. Balibar has questioned the difference between Locke and Leibniz on this point. He rejects Cassirer’s opposition of the Leibnizian-Wolffian conception of the soul as *vis activa* to the Lockean one, characterizing the soul as a simple passive faculty.<sup>4</sup> In Balibar’s opinion, Locke’s concept of *consciousness* represents the real foundation of rational psychology, which Wolff would have relegated to

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<sup>1</sup> J. Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book II, chap. XXVII, § 17, hereafter *Essay*.

<sup>2</sup> J. Locke, *Essay*, II, XXVII, § 14.

<sup>3</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais sur l’entendement humain*, book II, chap. XXVII, § 9. About this reconstruction see R. Perini, *Della soggettività finita. Dalla teoria del soggetto alla filosofia dell’uomo*, Perugia: Morlacchi, 2005, pp. 219-220.

<sup>4</sup> J. Locke, *Identité et différence. L’invention de la conscience*, présenté, traduit et commenté par É. Balibar, Paris: Seuil, 1998, p. 76. For the passage addressed by Balibar, see: E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1998, pp. 160-161.

the empirical rank in order to leave space for his own rational psychology. This is clearly a bold statement because there are several Lockean passages supporting the traditional interpretation. Also, Cassirer's position surely needs to be questioned, but through a different strategy, namely by noting that Wolff does not univocally define the soul as a *vis activa*.<sup>5</sup>

Within Wolff we indeed face a tension between the soul conceived as a passive faculty and consciousness as foundation of personal identity, namely of the *I*. Thus even if Wolff does not systematically pose this distinction, it seems to be consistent since in the *Psychologia rationalis* he defines *vires* as those capabilities of the soul to express itself "in continuo agendi conatu", and *facultates* as the passive expressions of the soul.<sup>6</sup> That reveals Wolff's debt towards Locke, which seems to be much greater as regards empiric psychology, where Wolff takes a distance from Leibniz though still keeping his terminology. A good example is provided by the necessity to admit a consciousness, which is already implicit within the perception, even if the Leibnizian distinction between perception and apperception is still endorsed.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the importance attributed by Balibar to consciousness within Locke's definition of the soul seems to have some consequences on Wolff's notion of *person*, meant as a continuity of the self-conscious subjectivity.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, Wolff indeed tries to keep himself in the Leibnizian track by settling an unsolvable reciprocal implication between the empirical perception and the rational apperception, which – as we will see – will raise an argumentative circularity. On the other hand, in keeping with his *logic of the faculties*, Wolff is aware of the different steps characterizing the elaboration of sensible data and therefore seems incapable to provide that unitary image of the psychological subject, which is nonetheless still required by formal logic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See M. Casula, A.G. *Baumgarten entre G.W. Leibniz et Christian Wolff*, «Archives de Philosophie», 42, 1979, 4, pp. 562-563. Casula underlines that while in the *Deutsche Metaphysik* (1719, hereafter *DM*) Wolff defined substance as that which has in itself the source of its mutations (§ 114) and added that this source is called force [*Kraft*] (§ 115), within the *Ontology* (1730, hereafter *Ont.*) he claims substance to be "subjectum, cui insunt essentialia et attributa eadem, dum modi successive variant" (§ 770). This *subjectum* can be associated to the Aristotelian definition of "ens, quod per se subsistit et sustinet accidentia" (§ 771).

<sup>6</sup> C. Wolff, *Psychologia rationalis*, § 54. Hereafter *PR*.

<sup>7</sup> See D. Poggi, *L'Essay di J. Locke e la Psychologia empirica di Christian Wolff*, in F.L. Marcolungo (ed.), *Christian Wolff tra psicologia empirica e psicologia razionale*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York: Olms, 2007, pp. 63-94 (here 74-77).

<sup>8</sup> See Wolff's definition of *person* within the *DM*, § 924, and D. Poggi, *cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> About this point R. Pozzo disagrees with M. Kuehn's underestimation of Wolff's

In this sense Wolff shares the difficulty that Locke denounces in the *Essay*, namely: how is it possible to psychologically interpret the sense of the identity/continuity of self-consciousness, without deriving its content from a sort of “substantial support”?<sup>10</sup> Obviously Locke and Wolff reach almost the same problem but from totally different paths. Locke is focused on the analysis of the cognitive faculties of the subject, while Wolff’s treatment deals with a more general consideration of the so-called *metaphysica specialis*. In fact Wolff’s partial distance from Leibniz about this psychological issue rests upon a disagreement about a topic that is halfway between cosmology and psychology, namely monadology, as we will later see.

What needs to be stressed here is the basic problem from which even Wolff’s division of psychology into empirical and rational comes. This problem consists in individuating a determined object for psychology, which can be investigated from different perspectives without the definiteness of its functions being weakened. The main troubles for the possibility to univocally define the object of psychology come from the need to clarify its status with respect to sensibility. This object is indeed constitutively ambivalent: on the one hand it is the object of self-consciousness within introspective self-analysis; on the other hand it is simply an object just like others in the world. The second possibility points to the need of a clear definition of sensibility, and moreover of the value attributed to those knowledge gained on the sensible level. It is at this stage that Baumgarten emerges as the promoter of a crucial turnaround.

The autonomy of the sensible dimension, from which aesthetics as an independent discipline rises, rests upon an implicit but unavoidable methodological assumption, namely a unitary conception of the finite subject.<sup>11</sup> This allows the object of psychology to be defined as the soul, in so far as it is endowed with a *vis repraesentativa* targeted to the external world.<sup>12</sup> Just like in the Wolffian system, the representations

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actual psychological perspective in the treatment of logic, see: R. Pozzo, *La logica di Wolff e la nascita della logica delle facoltà*, in F.L. Marcolungo (ed.), *cit.*, pp. 45-52 (here 51) and M. Kuehn, *The Wolffian Background of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*, in P.A. Easton (ed.), *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1997, pp. 229-250 (here 230).

<sup>10</sup> J. Locke, *Essay*, II, XXVII, § 16. See also R. Perini, *cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> See: K.E. Kaehler, *Baumgartens Metaphysik der Erkenntnis zwischen Leibniz und Kant*, «Aufklärung», 20, 2008, pp. 117-136 (here 123-124).

<sup>12</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, Halle, 1739 (1743, 1750), repr. ed. 1779, Hildesheim: Olms, 1963, §§ 506-507. Hereafter *Met*.

produced by this *vis* are based upon perceptions, which can be clear or obscure, distinct or confused. Since in the *Metaphysica* Baumgarten takes for granted these kinds of distinctions, we need to refer to the *Acroasis logica* in order to assess his adherence to the Wolffian background. Here Baumgarten explains, in keeping with Wolff, that the knowledge (identified to the perception) we have within thought consists in the perception accompanied by apperception, that is to say by consciousness. Thus, since knowledge is equal to perception, perception without consciousness (namely an obscure perception) does not raise any thought. The same goes for confused perceptions, which are targeted to several obscure determinations of the object.<sup>13</sup>

So, consciousness is the distinctive mark of both the perceiving soul and the thinking subject and moreover it reveals the identity between those two concepts. That is always carried out according to a Wolffian assumption: to think means to be conscious of something.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the soul has to count as the sufficient reason of the thoughts that are instantiated in it, just like the substance is the sufficient reason of its accidents.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence the *vis repraesentativa* of the soul constitutes the *ratio* of the *repraesentatum*. This *repraesentatum* coincides first of all with the part of the world which is closest to the soul, namely the body,<sup>16</sup> which interacts with other physical beings within space and time, and nonetheless influences the representative and cognitive activity of the soul. As a result the soul is defined as *vis repraesentativa universi* but *pro positu corporis sui*.<sup>17</sup> The *vis* of the representing *I* is influenced by a causality to which it has been exposed so far as soul. Baumgarten's agreement with Wolff seems here to be almost complete, but if we focus the attention on at least three points, we can perceive a different background setting.

The first point consists in the Wolffian *perceptio totalis*<sup>18</sup> to be understood by Baumgarten in a monadological sense, namely as the totality of representations *within* the soul.<sup>19</sup> This allows Baumgarten to systematically determine the *fundus animae* as the "complexum perceptionum obscurarum" based on the position of the soul within the

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<sup>13</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Acroasis logica in Christianum L.B. de Wolff dictabat*, Halle, 1761, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1983, §§ 1-4.

<sup>14</sup> C. Wolff, *Psychologia empirica*, § 23 (hereafter *PE*).

<sup>15</sup> *Met.*, § 505, according to the principle presented at § 197.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, § 508.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, § 513; C. Wolff, *PR*, § 68.

<sup>18</sup> *PE*, § 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Met.*, § 514.

body. In other words, the proper modality of knowledge of the human subject is recognized as arising from a mixture of distinct and confused perceptions.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the identity between *what* is represented and *how* it is represented is essentially kept in a Wolffian way.<sup>21</sup>

The second point concerns Wolff's use of a generic *we* in order to designate the *subject* of consciousness he analyzes within the *Psychologia empirica*,<sup>22</sup> whereas Baumgarten clearly uses the singular *I*.<sup>23</sup>

The last point deals with the demonstration of the actual existence of those beings, which are objects of psychology. Within Wolff indeed this demonstration is logically consistent, but implicitly supposes a cosmo-theological premise, namely the dependence of these substances upon God as creative cause. As we will see, Baumgarten does not deny God's role within his system, but states the relationship between cosmology and psychology in a quite different way.

However if we take into account not only the goal of Wolff's empirical psychology, but also the way in which he differentiates it from rational psychology, we see that it would make no sense to expect Wolff to provide a more accurate determination of the subjectivity of the soul in its relationship with the empirical dimension.

Although Wolff is the first to provide a systematic distinction between empirical and rational psychology, his definition of the relationship between them is quite oscillating, and this ambiguity seems to lead to circularity. This can be better assessed by distinguishing between the objects of the empirical and rational psychology as respectively *consciousness* and *soul*.<sup>24</sup> As regards this feature the best reference point is represented by §193 of the *Deutsche Metaphysik*, which is clearer than the correspondent §20 of the *Psychologia empirica*. Soul and consciousness do not coincide because the latter does not contain the essence of the former; but rather *within* the soul there is *also* something of which we cannot immediately be conscious, that can be known not

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<sup>20</sup> On the Eckhartian root of the *fundus animae* see A. Nuzzo, *Kant and Herder on Baumgarten's Aesthetica*, pp. 577-597 (here 580).

<sup>21</sup> *Met.*, § 510.

<sup>22</sup> *PE*, §§ 24-26.

<sup>23</sup> *Met.*, § 504.

<sup>24</sup> See W. Euler, *Bewußtsein – Seele – Geist. Untersuchungen zur Transformation des Cartesischen „Cogito“ in der Psychologie Christian Wolffs*, in O.-P. Rudolph, J.-F. Goubet (eds.), *Die Psychologie Christian Wolffs. Systematische und historische Untersuchungen*, pp. 11-50 (here 21-24); J.-P. Paccioni, *Wolff est-il « le vrai inventeur de la psychologie rationnelle » ? L'expérience, l'existence actuelle et la rationalité dans le projet wolffien de la psychologie*, in O.-P. Rudolph, J.-F. Goubet (eds.), *cit.*, pp. 75-97 (here 96).

through experience but through syllogisms. Once more the primacy of the empirical element seems to be weakened by the necessary reference to a logical *ratio*. Thus, on the one hand empirical psychology has the task to confirm within experience the conclusions of rational psychology,<sup>25</sup> but on the other hand these conclusions receive their principles from the empirical ones.<sup>26</sup>

Such a paradoxical situation mainly rests upon Wolff's peculiar concept of *experience*, implying that the empirical and the rational approach cannot be separated, but rather must always be distinct and connected, because the empirical psychology has evidence but lacks demonstrative character, whereas the contrary holds for the rational psychology.<sup>27</sup> However, despite the undeniable relevance attributed by Wolff to empirical data, as the beginning of the cognitive process,<sup>28</sup> and his explicit methodological purposes, the rationalistic formalism still seems to be irreducible.<sup>29</sup>

On the contrary Baumgarten's empirical psychology has a more evident primacy within the cognitive process, and this directly depends upon the strongly individual determination characterizing the knowing subject. Of course Baumgarten warns against the dangerous consequences of a superficial merger of reason and experience, but his conception of experience, even if apparently similar to the Wolffian one, is much more focused on recognizing the intrinsic rationality of

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<sup>25</sup> See: C.A. Corr, *Christian Wolff's Distinction between Empirical and Rational Psychology*, «Studia Leibnitiana», Suppl. 14, 1975, pp. 195-215 (here 199-200).

<sup>26</sup> About the main issues of the distinction between the two psychologies, see: J. École, *Des rapports de l'expérience et de la raison dans l'analyse de l'âme ou la Psychologia empirica de Christian Wolff*, «Giornale di Metafisica», 21, 1966, pp. 589-617; Id., *De la nature de l'âme, de la déduction de ses facultés, de ses rapports avec le corps, ou la Psychologia rationalis de Christian Wolff*, «Giornale di Metafisica», 24, 1969, pp. 499-531. On the circularity of the demonstrative relationships between them, see: J. École, *Introduction to Psychologia rationalis*, in C. Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*, II. Abteilung-Lateinische Schriften, Band 6, Hildesheim: Olms, 1968, p. 7; W. Euler, *cit.*, pp. 19-24, 30, 49; T. Arnauld, *Où commence la Métaphysique allemande de Christian Wolff?*, in O.-P. Rudolph, J.-F. Goubet (eds.), *cit.*, pp. 61-73 (here 64-67); F. Piselli, *Perfectio phaenomenon*, Milano: ISU, 1988, pp. 40-41.

<sup>27</sup> See: J.-P. Paccioni, *cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> See: J. École, *La Métaphysique de Christian Wolff*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1990, vol. I, p. 78; T. Arnauld, *cit.*, p. 62; Id., *Le critère du métaphysique chez Wolff. Pourquoi une Psychologie empirique au sein de la métaphysique?*, «Archives de Philosophie», 65, 2002, 1, pp. 35-46.

<sup>29</sup> See W. Euler, *cit.*, p. 33.

sensibility.<sup>30</sup> In fact, since Wolff defines perception through experience to be depending on attention<sup>31</sup> he is founding even the possibility of experience upon pure rational principles. Baumgarten instead puts his treatment of experience at the beginning of the exposition of the inferior cognitive faculty<sup>32</sup> and stresses its pre-reflective character, which nonetheless falls into his extensive treatment of the subjective faculties. Thus Wolff's indifference in the use of the words *soul* or *mind* to designate the object of his empirical psychology only reflects that the nature of the subject is not his first goal. Baumgarten's indifferent use of *I* and *soul* has instead much deeper theoretical roots.

Indeed Baumgarten expands the chapter of his *Metaphysica* devoted to empirical psychology in several ways not found in Wolff.<sup>33</sup> Baumgarten's distinction between the two branches of psychology is essentially attributable to the Wolffian conception, insofar as empirical psychology draws its claims more from experience, and rational psychology does so "by means of a longer series of inferences from the concept of soul"<sup>34</sup>. However Baumgarten's clear reference to the singular subjectivity seems to mark a fundamental distinction.<sup>35</sup> The nature of the *I* and its relationship with the body are indeed the proper topics of empirical psychology,<sup>36</sup> while, turning to the first section of rational psychology, concerning the nature of the soul, Baumgarten begins with a definition of the *anima humana* as simply that "soul which is in the closest connection [*commercium*] with the human being".<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, also in this pure rational contest the basis of the treatment is empirical and even refers to points that had been treated within *Ontology* and *Cosmology*. The goal is to repeat from a pure rational perspective what had already been gained in the empirical field, namely that "*anima humana est vis repraesentativa universi pro positu corporis humani in eodem*".<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Met.*, § 544. About Wolff's subordination of experience, namely sensibility and imagination, to reason see: *DM*, §§ 371-372 and *Philosophia practica universalis*, vol. II, § 300.

<sup>31</sup> *PE*, §§ 264-265, 267; *PR*, §§ 23-25, 372-373.

<sup>32</sup> *Met.*, *Seccio III (Sensus)*.

<sup>33</sup> See: C.D. Fugate-D. Hymers (eds.), A.G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysics: A Critical Translation with Kant's Elucidations, Selected Notes and related Materials*, London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> *Met.*, § 503.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, § 504. See also F. Piselli, *cit.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>36</sup> *Met.*, §§ 505-513.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, § 740.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, § 741.



Thus the universality of reason cannot be skipped even on the sensible plane, on the contrary only insofar as the empirical results about *my* soul can be extended to the human soul in general, can rational psychology demonstrate the soul to be necessarily a spirit, an understanding, that is to say a person.<sup>39</sup>

The original feature of Baumgarten's approach to psychology consists in fixing the *intrinsic* rationality of empirical knowledge. Once the subjective self-consciousness has been recognized as crucial, *perception*, *representation* and *knowledge* can be considered as equivalent, as expressions of rationality. Thus, of course the empirical psychology remains topical, but at the same time the small number of paragraphs devoted by Baumgarten to rational psychology (in particular in comparison to Wolff) does not imply the systematic weakening of the latter.<sup>40</sup> It is exactly by virtue of the described systematic link between the two branches of psychology that sensibility can reach its autonomy. The rational structure of the sensible sphere is legitimated by the content of the *fundus animae*, namely by those *perceptiones praegnantes*, which express the complexity of the sensible in the unity of the representative act, without being predicate of a judgement.

## 2. The cognitive value of the *fundus animae*

Within his *Antrittsvorlesung* (1740) Baumgarten states he is going to clarify the relevant changes between the first and the second edition of the *Metaphysica*. He also adds those changes to consider, in particular, empirical psychology. In the second version of this section he indeed matches a particular logic to any faculty of the inferior knowledge, thus preparing a sort of propaedeutic to the *Aesthetic*. It will be characterized just like a particular kind of logic targeted both to obscure representations, and to clear but confused ones.<sup>41</sup>

We need indeed to focus on Baumgarten's conception of clearness and obscurity, therefore the nature of the *vis repraesentativa universi* comes to be a central point, and not by chance it is the main divergence theme between Baumgarten and Wolff (and the Wolffians).

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<sup>39</sup> See: C.W. Dyck, *Kant and Rational Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 45-46.

<sup>40</sup> See: M. Casula, *La Metafisica...*, cit., p. 167, who on this point partially disagrees with C. Schweiger, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Ein intellektuelles Porträt*, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2011, pp. 37-38.

<sup>41</sup> See: H. Adler, *Fundus Animae – Der Grund der Seele. Zur Gnoseologie des Dunklen in der Aufklärung*, «Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte», 62, 1998, pp. 197-220 (here 205-206).

In fact Baumgarten's conception of clarity is more dynamic than the Wolffian one, because every perception, as intensive as extensive, is endowed with a force [*Kraft*], which has an impact on other perceptions in different ways.<sup>42</sup> In case of intensively clear representations this force operates insofar as it brings a representation to be distinct, and that clarifies Baumgarten's theory of abstraction, which is not based upon the confrontation among the marks [*notae*], but upon their suppression.<sup>43</sup> If we consider instead the extension of a representation – that is to say the richness of its marks – we see that it is possible to juxtapose both clear-obscure as distinct-confused representations. In fact an obscure and confused representation can come to be stronger than a clear and distinct one only by virtue of a greater number of marks, which makes it *praeagnans*<sup>44</sup> and *vivida*,<sup>45</sup> two characterizations totally absent in Wolff.<sup>46</sup> The obscure representations constituting the *fundus animae* are endowed with a vivifying force, which allows their position next to the clear ones in a sort of reciprocal enrichment.<sup>47</sup>

Sure Baumgarten undeniably owes much towards both Leibniz and Wolff regarding the starting structure. He takes from these authors the determination of clearness as either intensive or extensive. Moreover, in keeping with Wolff, he accepts the general division of the faculties of the soul between superior and inferior. Yet Baumgarten maintains that distinctions among representations in terms of degrees (degrees of clearness, distinctness or adequateness) are not sufficient to determine a qualitative difference among the knowledge to which these representations give occasion. The nature of a knowledge can be established only through the rational analysis of the way in which a determined representation – more or less clear and distinct – is posed by the subject. In this sense Baumgarten's distinction between intuitive and symbolic knowledge is paradigmatic, for Baumgarten does not oppose intuitive and symbolic knowledge, but considers them as two sides of the

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<sup>42</sup> *Met.*, § 531.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, § 529.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, § 517.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, § 541.

<sup>46</sup> See. C. Schweiger, *cit.*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>47</sup> See: P. Pimpinella, *Cognitio intuitiva bei Wolff und Baumgarten*, in M. Oberhausen, H.P. Delfosse, R. Pozzo (eds.), *Vernunftkritik und Aufklärung. Studien zur Philosophie Kants und seines Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2001, pp. 265-294 (here 292-293). For a further treatment of the *fundus animae* in Baumgarten see also: H. Adler, *cit.* and Id., *Die Prägnanz des Dunklen*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1990.

only *nexus significativus*. By doing so he reveals his approach to be much more oriented to the modality in which a being is known than to the definition of its essence.<sup>48</sup> According to Baumgarten we have an intuitive knowledge when the subject's relationship with the thing represented is greater than its relationship with the signs by which the thing is represented. The opposite case gives rise to symbolic knowledge.<sup>49</sup> It is worth noting that the reference to the orientation of subjective perception supposes the subject to be both the pole of a relationship with the thing, and the criterion to establish which kind of knowledge raises from this relationship. Baumgarten does not see in symbolization a technique to supply the lack of distinction of a representation, but only a different way of the subjective reference to the thing. This redefinition of the relationship between intuitive and symbolic knowledge will also be the basis for the transition from the epistemic to the aesthetic perspective.

The conception of truth changes in parallel with the new conception of intuition: we no longer speak of an unconditional truth, which is object of an intuition totally subtracted from error, but rather of a probability, which is unavoidably linked to the point of view of the human subject.<sup>50</sup>

The increased involvement of the subject in determining the nature of knowledge is possible on the basis of the identification of it as much as substance in interaction with others, and as rational reference for the analysis of these interactions. As we have seen, Wolff used the terms *soul* and *mind* without any apparent difference, but without drawing the conclusions that Baumgarten does, and now we can clearly assess the presumptions of this theoretical difference.

Also, by treating the question from the perspective of the *fundus animae* we reach the same results we gained by comparing the nature of the subject in Wolff's and Baumgarten's psychology. Wolff's empirical psychology is characterized by a focus on *our* experience of the soul, whereas Baumgarten's is more directly targeted to the *I, my* soul.<sup>51</sup>

Since this rational subjectivity is active also in the empirical dimension, the definition of this dimension as merely *sensibilis* sounds inadequate. This definition indeed does not show the relationship

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<sup>48</sup> See: J. Barnouw, *The Cognitive Value of Confusion and Obscurity in the German Enlightenment: Leibniz, Baumgarten, and Herder*, «Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture», 24, 1995, pp. 29-50 (here 37).

<sup>49</sup> *Met.*, § 620.

<sup>50</sup> See: S. Malinowski-Charles, *Baumgarten et le rôle de l'intuition dans les débuts de l'esthétique*, «Les Études philosophiques», 75, 2005, 4, pp. 537-558 (here 544-545); C.A. Corr, *cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>51</sup> *Met.*, § 504 and C.W. Dyck, *cit.*, pp. 45-46.

bridging the sensibility and the faculties of the subject, so Baumgarten adopts the term *sensitivus* in order to make reference, for example, to the faculty of imagination.<sup>52</sup> Thus Baumgarten reveals here a solid Leibnizian perspective, but seems to go even beyond Leibniz as he claims the matter of the *fundus animae* to be rationally analysable.<sup>53</sup> In this direction the obscure side of consciousness is recognized as the beginning of that cognitive process, whose goals are clearness and distinctness, but once again this structure supposes a unified conception of the subject.

We are here facing how Baumgarten takes from the different sources of tradition only those elements he needs in order to make his system effective. In this case Wolff's methodological rigour fits with Baumgarten's goal of establishing a new, well-crafted structure for the cognitive faculty of the human subject. Nonetheless, to give actual rise to this purpose, he needs to rescue some typical Leibnizian topics rejected by Wolff, such as monadology and pre-established harmony, as we are going to see.

### 3. The theoretical dependence of Cosmology upon Psychology

Unlike Leibniz, who in 1714 had opened both the *Principes de la nature et de la grace, fondés en raison* and the *Monadologie* with the definition of the concept of monad, Baumgarten does not mention this concept in his first works, but only in the first section of the *Metaphysica*, namely the *Ontologia*.<sup>54</sup> Here he presents the most salient characters of the concept of monad, which will be recalled also in the *Cosmology*.<sup>55</sup> This spurious treatment is a first clear clue of the distance from Leibniz, confirmed by some other factors, which are not so easy to be detected because Baumgarten uses Leibnizian terms to pose definitions, whose contents are nonetheless quite different from the Leibnizian aim. In § 398 Baumgarten ascribes to the monad the character of impenetrability, which Leibniz does not need to introduce since his monads have no "windows".

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<sup>52</sup> The term *sensitivus* will be crucial for the rise of Kant's theory of sensibility, insofar as it will be opposed to *sensualis*. In this direction see T. Nakazawa, *Kants Begriff der Sinnlichkeit. Seine Unterscheidung zwischen apriorischen und aposteriorischen Elementen der sinnlichen Erkenntnis und deren lateinischen Vorlage*, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2009, pp. 170-171, 188-189, 192-193, 227-231, 240-244.

<sup>53</sup> See: M. Bell, *The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought, 1700-1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Met.*, §§ 230-245.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, §§ 392-405, 406-429.

This character is consistent with Baumgarten's cosmological perspective, which uses the monads to give reason for the constitution of bodies. Thus we can now understand some peculiar characters concerning Baumgarten's description of the relationships among monads: their being mutually influenceable, mutable and modifiable,<sup>56</sup> their reciprocal link as cause and consequence,<sup>57</sup> their being in contrast to each other.<sup>58</sup> To explain this kind of relationships Baumgarten introduces in the following paragraphs concepts like *motion*, *rest*, etc.,<sup>59</sup> but it remains unclear whether these categories concern only the physical link between the monads or are actually intrinsic to them.

The consequences of this theoretical divergence from Leibniz are even more evident as regards the properties of extension. Within the *Cosmology* Baumgarten indeed cannot avoid the *vexata quaestio* concerning how a set of non-extended monads can generate the body, as being something that occupies a determined space. He initially characterizes the elements of the extended world as substantial monads,<sup>60</sup> but at the same time he would like to keep their non-spatial character.<sup>61</sup> Yet, from their impenetrability it necessarily results that they must occupy a space according to the temporal order of simultaneity. This is an exemplar case of the dynamic sketched above: Baumgarten uses Leibniz's words, but in a completely different way from this latter. The monads are indeed by no means defined as "mathematical points, in which nothing aside from absence of extension is posited", but as "physical points", which admit extension.<sup>62</sup>

With this original formulation Baumgarten opens up to a consideration of monadology even more placed into cosmology, with particular reference to the philosophy of nature.<sup>63</sup> The immediate consequence of this attitude is the demonstration of the universal value of the theory of pre-established harmony that is extended beyond the simple

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, § 396

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, § 400

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, § 408.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, §§ 411-418.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, § 394.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, § 397.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, § 399. See also: G. Gawlick-L. Kreimendahl (eds.), A.G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysik*, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: frommann-holzboog, pp. 58-62; E. Watkins, *On the Necessity of the Nature of Simples: Leibniz, Wolff, Baumgarten, and the pre-critical Kant*, «Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy», 3, 2006, pp. 261-314 (here 295 ss.).

<sup>63</sup> See: G. Gawlick-L. Kreimendahl (eds.), *cit.*, pp. 62-70.

relationship between body and soul.<sup>64</sup> Not by chance this latter is the only case in which Wolff admits the pre-established harmony.<sup>65</sup>

Of course Baumgarten agrees with Wolff, insofar as the structure of being is formal and rests upon the principle of non-contradiction. Yet he needs to keep his monadological system and, as a consequence, the pre-established harmony. To this end he introduces an underdetermination of the principle of sufficient reason that was alien both to Leibniz and Wolff. It is the *principium rationati*, claiming that each monad is *rationatum* of the one that precedes it and *ratio* of the one that follows it.<sup>66</sup> The corollary of this principle is the *principium utrimque connexorum*.<sup>67</sup> By stating this principle Baumgarten aims to provide an intelligible link between the monads, so that each of them could represent the whole world from the partial perspective of the relation *ratio-rationatum*.

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<sup>64</sup> *Met.*, §§ 448- 463.

<sup>65</sup> See: J. École, *Un essai d'explication rationnelle du monde ou la Cosmologia generalis de Christian Wolff*, «Giornale di metafisica», 18, 1963, 6, pp. 622-650 (here 637, 641); Id., *La Philosophia prima sive Ontologia de Christian Wolff. Histoire, doctrine et méthode*, «Giornale di metafisica», 16, 1961, 1, pp. 114-125 (here 121). For a general overview about this debate see: G. Fabian, *Die Lehre von der prästabilierten Harmonie und vom psychophysischen Parallelismus in der Leibniz-Wolffschen Schule. Beitrag zur Geschichte des Leib-Seele-Problems*, Langensalza: Beyer & Söhne, 1925, pp. 36-37; L.W. Beck, *Early German Philosophy. Kant and his Predecessors*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, pp. 226, 405; A. Bissinger, *Die Struktur der Gotteserkenntnis. Studien zur Philosophie Christian Wolffs*, Bonn: Bouvier u. Co., 1970, pp. 24-25; M. Casula, A.G. Baumgarten..., cit., pp. 554-556; Id. *La metafisica*..., cit., pp. 24, 45; Id., *Die Lehre von der prästabilierten Harmonie in ihrer Entwicklung von Leibniz bis A.G. Baumgarten*, in *Akten des II. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses* (Hannover 17-22 Juli 1972). Bd. III, Wiesbaden: Steiner, «Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa», 14, 1975, pp. 397-414; H. Poser, *Zum Begriff der Monade bei Leibniz und Wolff*, in *Akten des II. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses*, cit., pp. 383-395; M. Paolinelli, *Metodo matematico e ontologia in Christian Wolff*, «Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica», 66, 1974, 1, pp. 3-39 (here 17-18); B. Paz, *Christian Wolffs Ontologie. Ihre Voraussetzungen und Hauptdimensionen (mit besondere Berücksichtigung der Philosophie von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz)*, «Aufklärung», 12, 2001, 2, pp. 27-49; P. Kobau, *Ontologia*, in M. Ferraris (ed.), *Storia dell'ontologia*, Milano: Bompiani, 2008, pp. 98-145 (here 122); M. Favaretti Camposampiero, *Conoscenza simbolica. Pensiero e linguaggio in Wolff e nella prima età moderna*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York: Olms, 2009, pp. 499-500. For problems specifically concerned with psychology, see: A.L. Rey, *Ontologie et Psychologie dans la pensée de Christian Wolff: la raison de l'actualisation*, in O.-P. Rudolph-J.F. Goubet (eds.), cit., pp. 99-118 (here 111-118).

<sup>66</sup> *Met.*, § 23.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, § 24.

Baumgarten strongly insists on the universal value of this principle, which is exactly one of those topics on which, in the preface to the second edition of the *Metaphysica* (1742), he states he has “added some new definitions and proofs”.<sup>68</sup>

Baumgarten generally intends *ratio* (*Grund*) as *reason* or *general ground* of a being,<sup>69</sup> just like a *vis* (*Kraft*) characterizes the internal relationship whereby the essence of a substance founds the inherence of its *attributa* to itself.<sup>70</sup> This meaning of *ratio* as *vis* exactly expresses the representative totally internal activity of the monad. As regards the *modi* and even more the *relationes* of the substance we need a further *ratio* because in this case we are dealing with external determinations of the substance. The *ratio* we need at this stage is no more characterized as *vis*, but as *causa* (*Ursache*), insofar as it provides the principle of that *complementum possibilitatis*, which coincides with existence. This latter meaning of *ratio* shows the representative activity of the monad to be causally conditioned by the position of its body in the world.

Such a double determination of the nature and activity of the monad does not sound surprising, since it is the result of Baumgarten’s peculiar characterization of the subject within the *Psychologia empirica*. The self-conscious activity of the *I*-soul not only *represents* the world, but is at the same time conditioned by the position in the world of its closest object, namely the body. Thus the subject is *ratio* of the world insofar as it represents the world, but also materially interacts with it. It is not possible to separate these two kinds of relationship from each other since the subjectivity is structurally concerned with the metaphysical explanation of reality.<sup>71</sup>

It is worth noting that the theory of the pre-established harmony between soul and body is exposed within the *Psychologia rationalis*, whereas it would have been apparently more consistent with Baumgarten’s general system to treat it in the section of the *Psychologia empirica* properly devoted to the *commercium* between soul and body.<sup>72</sup> This choice seems particularly strange because that *commercium* constitutes the issue in which the relationship between psychology and cosmology is most evident, namely the point where the representative

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, *Praefatio Editionis II*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, § 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, § 197.

<sup>71</sup> See: C.W. Kim, *Der Begriff der Welt bei Wolff, Baumgarten, Crusius und Kant. Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte von Kants Weltbegriff von 1770*, Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2004, p. 158.

<sup>72</sup> *Met.*, *Sec.* XXII, §§ 733-739.

activity of the simple substance can be appreciated as concretely effective within external reality. If we look at this choice by bearing in mind Baumgarten's unitary conception of the subject, we can find a further confirmation of this basic assumption. This confirmation deals with the relationship between empirical and rational psychology. There is no doubt indeed that the pre-established harmony between soul and body can be seen as a particular case of the universal pre-established harmony among substances. However, since in the former case what is at stake is the soul-substance – which coincides with that thought representing the whole world – the empirical approach is not enough. Rather, we need a logical deduction, which retrospectively shows the common thread running through Baumgarten's whole work.<sup>73</sup> That is why the pre-established harmony between soul and body must be treated by Baumgarten within the *Psychologia rationalis*. We can now acknowledge that the cosmological application of the ontological fundamental principles rests upon the representative activity of the subject, whereas in Wolff it was psychology needing a cosmo-theological presupposition.

More specifically: we need to take into account a cosmological model – like the universal pre-established harmony among substances – from the empirical point of view, that is to say from the only point of view in which its consistency can be assessed. Yet assessing this consistency does not mean to demonstrate the validity of the theory, because in order to do so we must ultimately acquire the perspective of the logical subject, which allows us to reach the *ratio* of this model both as representative *vis* of the thinking subject and as *causality* of the acting body. Thus, on the one hand the *Psychologia empirica* is not subordinated to the *Psychologia rationalis*, but on the other hand it cannot disregard rationality, rather needs it, just to claim in turn its rational dignity. That is in accordance with Baumgarten's claim about the rational analysability of the representations belonging to the *fundus animae*. The rational and independent character of the empirical field reveals the unity of reason in the multiplicity of its expressions.

Here Baumgarten's path beyond Leibniz and even more beyond Wolff is clear, but, at the same time, Kant's theory of the two branches of knowledge is not accomplished yet. For Baumgarten the value of the approach of the finite subject to the object is not a general methodological feature orienting and limiting all the claims of reason, but is still concerned with a metaphysical system aiming at knowing the being in itself.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See: K.E. Kaehler, *cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>74</sup> See: K.E. Kahler, *cit.*, pp. 134-136; A. Nuzzo, *cit.*, p. 580; H. Adler, *cit.*, p. 206.



On this topic Baumgarten seems to still be affected by the Wolffian systematic spirit.

#### 4. Final remarks: two Kantian confirmations

Despite the above-mentioned oscillations, the importance of Baumgarten's psychology to Kant remains undeniable. Two points in particular seem to be the best examples of this influence, one direct and one indirect.

The first point concerns the axiological primacy of psychology that Baumgarten states within the *Metaphysica*. Kant indeed adopts this primacy since the *Nachricht* of 1765-1766, in which he proposes a new *ordo expositionis* for metaphysics. Not by chance the first step of this new order is represented by empirical psychology, insofar as it is the primary source of experience, after which come cosmology, ontology and theology.<sup>75</sup>

Kant's keeping of the traditional *ordo expositionis* as model for his lectures does not weaken the primacy of the *I* that he detects and highlights starting from the beginning of the 70's by commenting the *Metaphysica*. The clues of Baumgarten's influence mainly emerge within the course on anthropology of the winter semester 1772-1773, the *Duisburgischer Nachlass* of the middle 70's and the lectures on metaphysics of the late 70's. Here the rational dimension of the knowing subject is treated through a method and with a terminology leading to the theses of the *KrV*.

In the lectures on anthropology of the early 70's Kant treats the *I*-soul by following an intuitive-analytical method, which leads to a sharp primacy of empirical psychology upon the rational one. As an example we can take a passage of the *Anthropologie Collins*, in which Kant states that in the analysis of the *I* lots of the solutions judged by many philosophers as pregnant are nothing but immediate intuitions of ourselves.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover the *Duisburgischer Nachlass* reveals the conflicting nature of the Kantian presentation of categories. On the one hand, they are functional in determining the unity of the sensible manifold, on the other hand we have (later) to admit their use in the pure application to the *I*, though that does not imply an extension of our self-consciousness. The notes of the *Nachlass* in addition provide some relevant elements dealing with the nature of human understanding, whose limitation and finitude is fixed through its application to the sensibility.

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<sup>75</sup> I. Kant, *Nachricht*, Ak II, pp. 303-314.

<sup>76</sup> *Anthropologie Collins*, Ak XXV, p. 10.

Although almost in the same period Kant is concerned with psychology both in the lectures on metaphysics<sup>77</sup> and in those on anthropology,<sup>78</sup> there are no crossing references between these courses. This can mean that at this stage Kant is still involved in a deep rethinking of the meaning and the role of these disciplines. In a course of the late 70's devoted to the whole of the philosophical disciplines, called *Philosophical Encyclopaedia*, he explicitly states that the science targeted to the empirical treatment of thinking nature is called anthropology.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, on the one hand there is an empirical psychology, coinciding with anthropology; on the other hand there is a rational psychology, which Kant still treats within his courses on metaphysics. Therefore, even if both psychologies are sometimes defined as dealing with the *res cogitans*, it is nonetheless necessary to distinguish the real specific object of each of them.<sup>80</sup> Empirical psychology considers the self-intuition of the *I*, while rational psychology is concerned with the essence of the soul.<sup>81</sup>

These are the premises for understanding the second topic on which Baumgarten is useful to Kant's transition towards criticism. In this case Kant's reference to Baumgarten is negative. In fact, as we have seen, Baumgarten's treatment of psychology aims to contrast the dualism between *I* and soul by showing the coincidence of these two terms. That happens through a basically Leibnizian theory of substance, which is nonetheless settled into a Wolffian *ordo expositionis*. Of course Kant embraces the necessity of going beyond the *I*-soul dualism within psychology, but the direction in which he carries out this overcoming is opposite to Baumgarten's. Indeed Kant does not suggest the *I* and the soul to coincide, rather he bases his metaphysics upon a transcendental *I* and poses the soul on a different level, which cannot be reached with the instruments of human finite understanding.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See: *Metaphysik L<sub>I</sub>* (1778-1780).

<sup>78</sup> See: *Anthropologie Pillau*, Ak XXV, pp. 733-756.

<sup>79</sup> See: *Philosophische Enzyklopädie*, Ak XXIX, p. 11. For the impact of Baumgarten's empirical psychology on Kant's anthropology, see: N. Hinske, *Kant und Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Ein leider unerledigtes Thema der Anthropologie Kants*, «Aufklärung», 14, 2002, pp. 261-274 (here 263).

<sup>80</sup> H. Klemme, *Kants Philosophie des Subjekts. Systematische und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Selbstbewusstsein und Selbsterkenntnis*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1996, p. 104.

<sup>81</sup> H. Klemme, *cit.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>82</sup> Among Kant's scholars the possibility to identify the object of rational psychology with the soul is controversial. See H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 258 and

Borrowing a very effective, recently suggested, picture we could maintain that Baumgarten is a sort of springboard from which Kant jumps through the contemporary theories, in order to reach a new highness. But he always needs to come back to Baumgarten in order to get a new push.

Thus, beyond the above sketched “merits” usually acknowledged to Baumgarten, we must recognize that the gnoseological centrality of the *I* and the definitive overcoming of the *I*-soul dualism are further crucial topics to be taken into account for a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of his thought on modernity. From here on, a radical rethinking of the internal order of metaphysics and a consequent re-evaluation of its meaning become possible. Nevertheless, Baumgarten was not yet totally confident with the instruments for such a revolutionary instance. For this reason it seems that, at least about these themes, we are allowed to use Kant to clarify Baumgarten and not, as usual, vice versa.

#### ABSTRACT

Scholars are prone to emphasize A.G. Baumgarten's foundation of aesthetics as a discipline in its own right and Kant's use of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* as a handbook for his lectures on metaphysics. Nonetheless there are some further and deeper reasons for Baumgarten to mark a division between the so called Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition and the Kantian transcendental revolution. The goal of this paper is to take into account these reasons and to analyze them in order to show that they are rooted in psychology as it is treated in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*. The paper's aim is to highlight Baumgarten's methodological approach, that is, the use of Leibnizian doctrines, which are exposed through the Wolffian order. The radical originality of this procedure can be adequately assessed only by virtue of its Kantian development.

**Keywords:** *Psychologia empirica*, *Psychologia rationalis*, *fundus animae*, soul, subject

#### RESUMO

Os académicos tendem a enfatizar o papel de A.G. Baumgarten na fundação da estética como disciplina de seu pleno direito e o uso que Kant faz da *Metaphysica* de Baumgarten como manual de apoio para as suas aulas sobre metafísica. Não obstante, há várias e profundas razões para que Baumgarten marque uma divisão entre a chamada tradição leibniziano-wolffiana e a revolução transcendental de Kant. O objectivo deste artigo é o de levar em

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A. Brook, *Kant and the Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 11, who maintain that the object of rational psychology can be identified with the soul. For a radically alternative position, see: H. Klemme, *cit.*, pp. 301-305.

consideração estas razões e analisá-las de modo a provar que radicam na psicologia, tal como ela é tratada na *Metaphysica* de Baumgarten. Este artigo pretende salientar a abordagem metodológica de Baumgarten, ou seja, o uso das doutrinas leibnizianas, que são expostas através da ordem wolffiana. A originalidade radical deste método apenas pode ser adequadamente verificada graças ao seu desenvolvimento kantiano.

**Palavras-chave:** *Psychologia empirica*, *Psychologia rationalis*, *fundus animae*, alma, sujeito